



Data Points

RESULTS FROM THE 1997 CALIFORNIA WOMEN’S HEALTH SURVEY

Urinary incontinence is a widespread problem for women, and becomes more prevalent as women age. Causes of incontinence include a weakening of the muscles and ligaments in the pelvis which often follows childbirth, a prolapsed uterus, and reduced bladder capacity. Other factors associated with incontinence are hormone use, having a hysterectomy, being overweight, lengthy gestation (42 or more weeks), and labor which lasted for more than 24 hours. White and Latina women are more likely to experience incontinence than African American and Asian women. Urinary incontinence can contribute to embarrassment, reduced engagement in social activities, and a decreased quality of life. Incontinence is the primary reason for nursing home admission, and, if not controlled, requires a higher level of care.

The 1997 California Women’s Health Survey asked 4,010 women, “A

common problem for women is bladder control. Do you have any problems with leaking urine?” Other questions identified women who had given birth to a baby, used hormones, were overweight, and had a hysterectomy.

Overall, 19% of the women in the survey reported urinary incontinence.

Urinary incontinence was more common among older women. Among women ages 65 and older, over 30% reported problems with urine leakage.

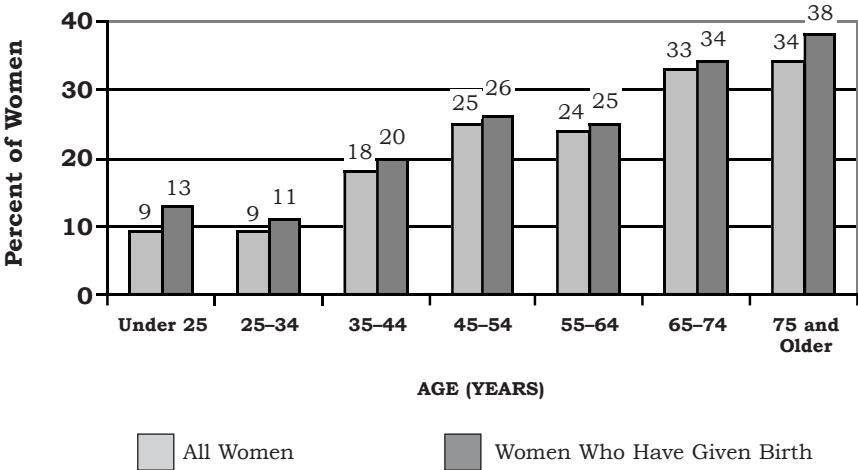
Among all women who experienced urinary incontinence:

- 87% had given birth to at least one child.
- 47% were taking hormones.
- 35% were overweight.
- 31% had had a hysterectomy.

URINARY INCONTINENCE AMONG CALIFORNIA WOMEN

CMRI (California Medical Review, Inc.)

Self-reported Incontinence Among Women, By Age; California, 1997



Public Health Message:

Urinary incontinence is a widespread problem for women, particularly older women and those who have given birth. Women should be informed that treatment is available to reduce or eliminate incontinence.

Issue 1, Number 24, Fall 1999
Second Printing